



MONTANA FISH, WILDLIFE & PARKS ANNUAL REPORT 2006



Montana Fish,
Wildlife & Parks

MAINTAINING MONTANA'S WILD HERITAGE

Montana's fish and big game species have benefited from over a century of careful stewardship. Each year new gains are made.

In 2006 the high-tech Fort Peck Multi-Species Fish Hatchery was dedicated. This facility will enhance angling throughout Montana.

Big game populations are generally stable, and in some cases overly abundant. A revised five-week hunting season and simplified big game regulations, combined with Montana's elk management plan, will help to bring populations within long-term goals and reduce game damage on private land.

The FWP Enforcement Division has been successful pursuing high-level poaching rings and reports have increased to the TIP-MONT crime stopper line due to the "Enough is Enough" public information campaign on poaching.

FWP's Parks Division, which conserves some of the state's most treasured landscapes, is making important improvements.

Despite these and other accomplishments, more needs to be done, especially for some lesser-known fish and wildlife species. To aid them, Montana is moving toward projects that make life better for whole communities of wild creatures and the natural surroundings they need to live.

As an important first step, FWP has joined other states in completing a national assessment of America's fish and wildlife. Hopes are high that this effort will lead to federal funding for some of the necessary conservation work ahead.



Bighorn sheep are transplanted from the Sun River Area in the 1950s

M. Jeff Hagener

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Director, Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

Brian Schweitzer

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Governor, State of Montana

Examples of comprehensive fish and wildlife conservation initiatives: Since 2001, \$5.6 million in federal State Wildlife Grants matched with at least \$2 million in state and partner dollars funded fish and wildlife surveys, inventories and ongoing research. Among the early benefits:

- Northern leopard frogs, once thought to be extinct west of the Continental Divide, were found near Eureka and Kalispell. Reintroduction efforts are being led by the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes on the Flathead Indian Reservation.
- Forty-eight fish species, 30 of them native, five amphibian species and 10 reptile species were found in the state's "fishless" prairie streams. The finding of these aquatic species helps to confirm the biological riches of Montana's prairie streams.
- A research project at the University of Montana on bats in burned forests revealed that the flying mammals prefer to roost in large snags close to water. The discovery will help forest managers to conserve this and other species with similar habits.
- In 2007, projects in areas surrounding the Big Hole and Milk River, and elsewhere, will benefit a variety of species by identifying their needs and meeting them through habitat conservation and restoration.



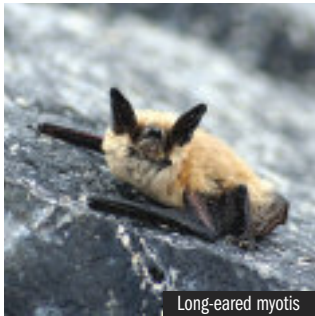
Northern Leopard frog



Sturgeon chub



Downy woodpecker



Long-eared myotis

Habitat-wide projects, including multiple-species surveys, help FWP to determine which species are doing well and which are not in a location. Conservation of nongame species, over 85 percent of Montana's birds, mammals, reptiles and amphibians including many backyard species, relies heavily on public donations made through Montana's Nongame Tax Checkoff and various federal grant programs.



Thanks to hard choices made by generations past, Montana’s fish and wildlife now “brand” our state as an extraordinary place to live and do business, according to information compiled as part of The Montana Challenge project.

For more on the Montana Challenge, a compilation of data on the economics and demographics of Montana and what it means to the state’s fish and wildlife, go to fwp.mt.gov and use the search words “Montana Challenge.”

Mule deer

2006 IN THE NEWS

HUNTING

Hunters submitted an estimated **125,755 species applications** for special license drawings on the FWP web site at fwp.mt.gov. Hunters also obtained about 96,500 general hunting licenses on-line.

Montana’s new five-dollar-a-chance **SuperTag hunting license** lottery took off. Hunters bought chances to win the hunt of a lifetime, including 20,711 chances to win

the bighorn sheep SuperTag and 17,102 chances to win the elk SuperTag. Hunters also purchased 13,123 chances on the moose SuperTag, 7,357 chances for a mountain goat SuperTag, and 6,639 chances to win a deer SuperTag. The SuperTag lottery grossed \$324,660 to be used for hunting access and law enforcement.

Bighorn sheep populations are at record highs in some areas. More than 500 bighorn sheep were observed during an aerial survey of Missouri Breaks Hunting District



680. Nearly 21,000 hunters applied for 487 bighorn sheep hunting opportunities.

Montana's first bison hunt in 15 years ended successfully Feb. 15, 2006. Fifty licenses were distributed in a drawing, with 16 allotted to Montana Indian tribes. A total of 6,177 individuals applied to participate. For a second fall '06 and winter '07 hunt, 7,125 applicants vied for 130 general public licenses. Montana Indian tribes accepted 10 licenses.

Hunters spent 440,000 days hunting on nearly 8.5 million acres of **Block Management lands**. A total of 1,245 landowners enrolled in the program.

FWP renewed a **five-year state tribal cooperative agreement** with the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes on bird hunting and fishing on the Flathead Indian Reservation.

FISHING

The new **Fort Peck Multi-Species Fish Hatchery**, dedicated on July 6, 2006, is the largest and most technically sophisticated facility in the state's hatchery system. With a staff of four, it can raise more than 3 million walleye fingerlings and 50 million walleye fry each year.

New Fishing Access Sites include:

- Black Bridge FAS, a 71-acre site near Glendive, donated by the Glendive Chapter of Walleyes Unlimited with support from the Montana Fish and Wildlife Conservation Trust.
- The Reynolds Pass pedestrian easement donated by the Olliffe family to provide access between two FASs on the Upper Madison River.
- Bearmouth FAS, a nearly 10-acre site at the Bearmouth Exit on I-90 in Granite County, donated by Stimson Lumber Company.
- Machler FAS, 62 acres on Big Spring Creek near Lewistown, provided through a conservation easement.

Permanent easements granted by the Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation created:

- Echo Lake FAS, 5 acres on Echo Lake located between Kalispell and Big Fork.
- Snowden Bridge FAS, 12 acres on the Missouri River about two miles from the North Dakota border.

In eastern Montana, the paddlefish quota of 1,000 fish was reached only 12 days into the season. **New paddlefish regulations** will help extend the period when fishing opportunities are available and reduce angling pressure on this important fishery.

FWP and the Kootenai Tribe of Idaho are working to-



Bighorn sheep



Bull trout

gether to devise better dam operating strategies that will do less harm to **endangered white sturgeon** downstream of Libby Dam.

FWP and the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes collaborated to obtain funding from the Bonneville Power Administration to purchase a section of land to **protect critical bull trout habitat** at the mouth of Elk Creek in FWP Region 1. The local community, led by the Swan Ecosystem Center, is raising funds to conserve the remaining unprotected two miles of the stream.

Waters damaged by past livestock practices, early mining activities, dams, and drought are being restored across the state. **Collaborative projects** are improving conditions on the Blackfoot, Big Hole, Jefferson, Shields and other rivers.

With over 59,000 miles of rivers and streams, Montana is home to 90 species of fish, 56 of which are native. Read Montana's annual fishing reports on-line at fwp.mt.gov/fishing



Medicine Rocks State Park



Montana FWP game wardens



Bannack State Park

PARKS AND RECREATION

For the first time since the early 1940s, **lighting inside the Lewis & Clark Carverns** was redesigned to showcase the park's natural features. Installation is planned in 2007.

Brush Lake State Park opened, the first state park site purchased and developed in northeastern Montana.

An acquisition adjacent to the **Alborton Gorge Recreational Corridor** on the Clark Fork River, 30 miles northwest of Missoula, added 20 acres to this 306-acre public recreation area.

The new **Outreach And Partnership Plan** for Montana State Parks will help strengthen customer service and increase awareness of State Parks programs.

In all, Montana's State Parks attracted 1,696 volunteers who provided 30,000 hours of service.

Nearly \$139,000 was raised through the sale of **nonresident snowmobile temporary permits**. The funding goes to help maintain Montana's 4,000 miles of groomed snowmobile trails and related services.

PROTECTING HEALTH AND HABITAT

FWP and the USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service are jointly conducting a **Bison Quarantine Feasibility Study** to attempt to certify isolated groups of Yellowstone bison as brucellosis free.

Most visitors to Placid Lake, Salmon Lake, Black Sandy, Cooney Reservoir, and Hell Creek highly rate the quality of the visitor experience provided at each of these water-based state parks.



Arctic grayling in the upper Big Hole River in Montana are the last river-dwelling grayling population in the lower 48 states. FWP, with landowners and federal and state agencies, committed to an unprecedented 20-year agreement to protect this unique population.

The state's **wolf management plan** is proving itself as a reliable tool in the field for integrating wolves into the landscape and helping Montanans adjust to living with wolves. FWP obtained a more accurate wolf population count thanks to those who reported wolf sightings on the FWP web site or by postcard.

Habitat reserved for wildlife grew:

- The Foundation for North American Wild Sheep helped FWP acquire 150 acres of bighorn sheep habitat near Anaconda.
- Funds from the Upper Clark Fork River Basin Restoration Grants Program helped add a 1,730-acre parcel of wildlife habitat to the Mt. Haggin Wildlife Management Area near Ramsay.
- The Conservation Fund helped add 109 acres to the Ninepipe Wildlife Management Area near Kalispell.
- FWP completed a conservation easement in the North Swan Valley protecting 7,203 acres with help from the Trust for Public Land.

FWP adopted a **chronic wasting disease management plan**. Key initiatives are already underway, including limits on the import of carcass parts from states where CWD has been identified. Montana has tested 9,800 wild deer and elk since 1998 without finding CWD in wild herds.

COMMUNICATION AND EDUCATION

An insatiable appetite for news and information drove more than **three million visitors** to the FWP web site at fwp.mt.gov, up from two million in 2005. Most often visited were:

- *Hunt Planner*— fwp.mt.gov/hunting/planahunt/
- *Bear Identification*— fwp.mt.gov/bearid/
- *Fishing Guide*— fwp.mt.gov/fishing/guide/
- *News*— fwp.mt.gov/news/
- *Parks*— fwp.mt.gov/lands/searchparks.aspx

FWP launched a new interactive web page titled **"Be Bear Aware"** to help homeowners and outdoor recreationists learn to live successfully with black and grizzly bears. The page includes a homeowner's check list to assist in identifying and correcting situations that attract bears.

FWP's Parks Division and the Office of Public Instruction announced 23 new **K-12 Indian education lesson**



Arctic grayling

plans based on Montana State Parks sites. The lesson plans are available at fwp.mt.gov under Parks & Recreation or Education.

Montana Outdoors magazine repeated as America's top state conservation magazine, winning top honors and recognition from among dozens of other entrants. Visit the magazine's website at fwp.mt.gov/mtoutdoors.

FWP's **Responsive Management unit** helped FWP stay in touch with the public it serves by surveying about 12,500 hunters, anglers, and park users. It also worked on the Montana Challenge project. Sponsored by FWP and the U.S. Forest Service, the Montana Challenge presents information to help Montanans better understand the value of fish and wildlife in a changing environment and suggests that Montana communities can generate economic activity by developing their fish and wildlife riches to attract business.

ENFORCEMENT

The new **"Enough Is Enough" public information campaign** made it clear there is no room for poachers in Big Sky Country. Montana is one of the few states where convicted poachers face jail time and hefty fines. FWP's partners in the campaign are the Montana Wildlife Federation, Montana Bowhunters' Association, and Montana Outfitters and Guides Association.

Since 1985, TIP-MONT has received more than **13,540 reports of poaching and other crimes**, resulting in 1,521 convictions. These convictions netted \$810,500 in fines and \$337,000 in restitution. Nearly \$155,000 in rewards were paid to citizens who reported suspected poachers and other outdoor crimes.

Wildlife watching is one of visitors' primary activities. The Montana Challenge project suggests that Montana communities can generate economic activity by developing birding trails, organizing wildlife festivals, enhancing fishing opportunities, catering to hunters, and otherwise displaying their fish and wildlife riches to attract business.

Read more about Montana FWP programs at fwp.mt.gov



FWP REVENUE SOURCES

Hunting And Fishing Licenses: This revenue source includes all license sales, interest earnings and miscellaneous revenues. Nonresident sales account for approximately two-thirds of license revenue.

Federal Revenue: Montana receives a variety of federal funds for fish and wildlife programs, including funds from the Federal Aid in Sport Fish and Wildlife Restoration programs. More than \$6.2 million comes from an excise tax on sporting arms and ammunition, handguns and certain archery equipment (Pittman-Robertson). An additional \$6.8 million in federal funding comes from an excise tax on fishing equipment and electric trolling motors, a federal fuel tax and import duties on fishing tackle and pleasure

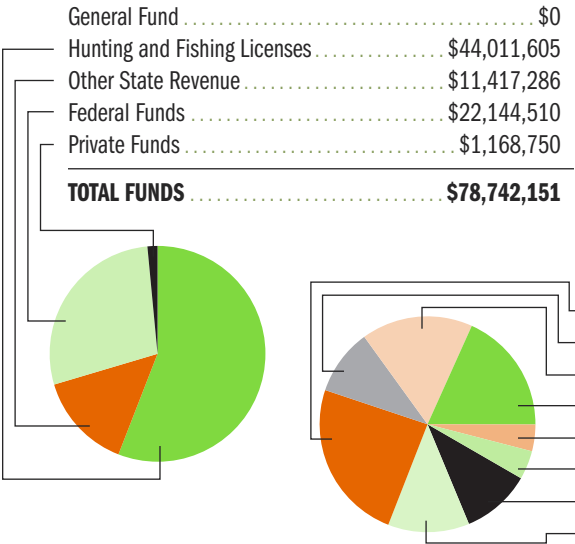
boats (Wallop-Breaux). Montana received about \$1 million from the federal State Wildlife Grant program to help fund research and management programs for species that have special conservation needs. The Land and Water Conservation Fund provided additional federal funding for State Parks and local communities.

Other State Revenue: Other state revenue sources include: a portion of the state’s lodging facilities use tax, a small percentage of the state fuel tax, a portion of light vehicle registration fees; nonresident state parks fees; and interest earnings from coal severance tax receipts.

State General Fund: Since the 2001 Legislative session, FWP has received no state general fund assistance. FWP continues to search for alternative funding sources.

2007 PROJECTED BUDGET

This illustration shows how FWP is funded. Actual annual revenues may fall above or below these figures.



PLANNED EXPENDITURES 2007

FWP spends its money two ways: **Operations:** Day-to-day management of Montana’s fish, wildlife and parks resources. **Capital:** Major repair and maintenance of FWP properties, renovation and construction of facilities, and protection, enhancement and acquisition of critical habitats.

EXPENDITURES:	
Operations	\$62,851,664
Capital	\$15,890,487
TOTAL	\$78,742,151

How operating expenditures are used:	
Fisheries	24.2%
Enforcement	9.9%
Parks	18.3%
Wildlife	16.7%
Communications and Education	4.0%
Information Services	4.3%
Management & Finance	10.4%
Field Services	12.2%

There are 10 times the number of visitors to Montana as there are residents. Those 9.8 million visitors a year generate 43,300 jobs and an economic impact of \$2.75 billion.



MONTANA FISH, WILDLIFE & PARKS

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Vice Chairman, Whitehall

Shane Colton
Billings

Vic Workman
Whitefish

John Brenden
Scobey

Montana FWP Mission

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks, through its employees and citizen commission, provides for the stewardship of the fish, wildlife, parks and recreational resources of Montana, while contributing to the quality of life for present and future generations.

Montana Outdoors is Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks' full-color magazine featuring the latest information on conservation issues, new management programs, and fishing, hunting, and parks recreation. A one-year subscription (six issues) is \$9. Call toll-free (800) 678-6888, or subscribe on-line at www.fwp.mt.gov/mtoutdoors.

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